



اللغة العربية | [Home](#) | [Foreign Policy](#) | [Foreign Relations](#) | [Diplomatic Missions](#) | [Foreign Mission](#) | [Key Documents](#) | [Contact us](#)

Articles published on 10-3-2003

Archive						
< March, 2003 >						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

الارشيف بالعربية

Palestinian Legislative Council Debates Appointment of Prime Minister

Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) will discuss Monday the appointment of Palestinian National Authority's prime minister in light of the Central Council's decision of bringing forward such a position within the Palestinian National Authority, Palestinian informed sources told IPC.

Rawhi Fatouh, Secretary of PLC told reporters that the PLC will be convened Monday to debate an important issue concerning the authorities to be given to the forthcoming Palestinian Prime Minister.

In case the PLC receives a formal letter from the Palestinian Executive Authority regarding the prime minister's authorities, the PLC will discuss such responsibilities after having forwarded them to a legal committee which, in its turn, will take its own decision on the matter, Fatouh said.

He added that given the committee's decision, the PLC will vote on the prime minister new post including his/her responsibilities and authorities.

Palestinian Minister of Planning and International Cooperation, Nabil Sha'ath, told Aljazeera channel that the prime minister will likely share the president of the Palestinian Authority a number of responsibilities as well as a part of the decision-making.

"The prime minister will enjoy wider responsibilities in terms of the executive administration of the Palestinian cabinet, including administrative, security and financial matters", Sha'ath said.

The Palestinian Central Council (PCC) approved Sunday the appointment of a Palestinian Prime Minister, naming Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), Secretary of Palestine Liberation Organization and Chief of Negotiation Department, as the holder of such an office.

Abu Mazen was nominated by President Yasser Arafat on Saturday, as he met with and given a speech to the PCC's members in the West Bank city of Ramallah.

Arab-Israeli parliament member (Israeli Knesset member), Ahmad Al-tibi was reported as saying, in response to Abu Mazen's appointment, that "if someone thinks that by appointing a prime minister-even with someone as important as Abu Mazen who has had a historic role in the Palestine Liberation Organization- that president Arafat will disappear, is mistaken.", Ha'arets Israeli Daily reported.

Some commentators believe that such a Palestinian move is a part of comprehensive Palestinian reforms in a bid to reform the Palestinian society at political, financial and social levels and so on.

Other political analysts believe that the appointment of a prime minister came in response to outside pressure, mainly American and Israeli, so that the Palestinian Authority could be able to make peace with Israel in a way that ensures security for the Israelis at the expense of Palestinian legitimate rights.

Israel over the past several months declared repeatedly dissatisfaction with President Yasser Arafat to the extent; it continues to besiege him in his office compound in the West Bank city of Ramallah for over 13 months.

Arafat has been elected democratically and under international observation by the Palestinian people as their president, since 1996, following the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in 1994.

Date: 2003-03-10

Q & A : The Palestinian Prime Minister

Frequently Asked Questions

On March 10, 2003, the Palestinian Legislative Council ("PLC") approved an amendment to the Palestinian Basic Law creating the position of a Palestinian Authority Prime Minister.

1. What is the purpose of creating the post of Prime Minister?

Creating a Prime Minister is part of the Palestinian reform process and is intended to create better governance through a division and balance of powers at the senior levels of the Palestinian Authority executive branch. The post of Prime Minister was created in response to Palestinian popular demand. Recent Palestinian public opinion polls show popular and increasing support for a Prime Minister. In August 2002, 69% of Palestinians polled supported the appointment or election of a Prime Minister. In November 2002, the level of support rose to 73%.

2. According to the proposed amendment to the Basic Law, what are the powers of the Prime Minister?

The powers of the Prime Minister have yet to be approved but, as currently set forth in the PLC amendment to the Basic Law the most important power of the Prime Minister is to oversee the work of all public and governmental institutions, *including the work of every ministry*. In addition, the Cabinet under the authority of the Prime Minister (and not the President), would now be the executive body responsible for developing the ministerial program to be approved by the PLC. Other powers include:

- forming the Cabinet (including appointment and removal of ministers and

delineation of ministerial responsibilities),
- appointing a minister to act as a deputy prime minister in the absence of the Prime Minister, and
- calling and presiding over Cabinet sessions.

3. What else does the amendment to the Basic Law provide?

Each minister (including the Prime Minister) must obtain a vote of confidence from the PLC before assuming the position. (New Article 64)

The number of ministers in addition to the Prime Minister shall be increased from a maximum of 19 to a maximum of 24. (Amendment to Article 65)

4. Who is accountable to whom?

The Prime Minister and his Cabinet must be approved by a PLC vote of confidence. The Cabinet as a whole (including the Prime Minister) reports to the PLC and can only be removed as a body by a PLC vote of no confidence. However, the Prime Minister reports to the President and may be removed by the President. Similarly, each minister reports to the Prime Minister and may only be removed by the Prime Minister (or a PLC vote of no confidence in such minister).

5. Who is responsible for security?

Internal security and public order (including preventive security, civil defense and police forces) are a Cabinet function (currently under the Ministry of Interior) and therefore, ultimately under the authority of the Prime Minister. Responsibility over national security resides with the President.

6. Who is responsible for negotiations with Israel?

The appointment of the Prime Minister does not directly relate to negotiations with Israel because the Prime Minister is a position within the Palestinian Authority, whereas negotiations with Israel are conducted by the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Negotiations with Israel are led by the PLO's Negotiations Affairs Department, headed by Mahmoud Abbas, operating under the authority of PLO Chairman Arafat.

6A. So what is the difference between the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)?

The Palestinian Authority is a temporary administrative body (intended only to serve during the interim period prior to the establishment of a Palestinian state) established by the Oslo Accords in 1994 to govern those areas of Occupied Palestinian Territories from which Israeli occupation forces

withdraw (currently 17.2% of the Occupied West Bank and approximately 80% of the Occupied Gaza Strip). Yasir Arafat was democratically elected President of the Palestinian Authority on January 20, 1996. To date, Mahmoud Abbas has not held a position within the Palestinian Authority.

The Palestine Liberation Organization, established in 1964, is the Palestinian government in exile and carries out the state functions of the Palestinian people, including negotiations with Israel. As part of the Oslo Accords, the government of Israel "decided to recognize the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people and to commence negotiations with the PLO. . . ." Yasir Arafat is the Chairman of the PLO. Mahmoud Abbas is Secretary General of the PLO Executive Committee and heads the PLO's Negotiations Affairs Department.

7. What is the process by which the post of Prime Minister will be finalized?

At the beginning of a PLC meeting on March 10, 2003, President Arafat nominated Mahmoud Abbas as Prime Minister.

The PLC then voted (64-3, 4 abstentions) in favor of creating the post of Prime Minister, a post which did not exist in the Palestinian Basic Law.

Later at the same meeting, the PLC adopted an amendment to the Palestinian Basic Law creating the position of Prime Minister and defining its powers. The draft amendment originated from the PLC Legal Committee.

The amendment was presented to President Arafat for approval on March 11, 2003.

The President has 30 days to (i) sign and publish the amendment in the official gazette, thereby making the amendment law or (ii) send the amendment back to the PLC with comments and the PLC will then debate the amendment in light of the President's comments and may override the President's comments by a two-thirds majority vote.

In the event of the President's approval of the amendment and Abbas' acceptance of the post, Abbas will have three weeks (with a possible two week extension) to submit his cabinet and its program to the PLC for a vote of confidence

Abbas has stated that he will not formally accept the position of Prime Minister prior to an agreement on the position's powers.

8. Who is Mahmoud Abbas?

Mahmoud Abbas is a founding member of Fatah, the largest political party of the PLO. He is married to Amina and has three sons: Mazen, Yaser and Tareq. He has seven grand-children and another on the way.

Abbas is also known familiarly as Abu Mazen ("Father of Mazen") in accordance with Arabic tradition which often refers to parents as Abu ("Father of") or Um ("Mother of") the first-born son.

Abbas was born in 1935 in the town of Safad in northeastern Palestine. During Israel's campaign against Palestinian civilians in 1948, Abbas and his family, together with most of Safad's Palestinian population, became refugees in Syria - Abbas walking all the way to the Syrian border on the other side of the Jordan River. Abbas worked as a day laborer laying floor tiles and as an elementary school teacher before earning his B.A. in law from the University of Damascus. He later earned a Ph.D. in history from Moscow's Oriental College.

Abbas is the Secretary General of the PLO Executive Committee (the highest PLO executive body). Abbas was the signatory to the 1993 Declaration of Principles that launched the Palestinian-Israeli peace process. In 1995, Abbas was the signatory to the Interim Peace Agreement with Israel.

Abbas heads the PLO's Negotiations Affairs Department, established in 1994 to oversee permanent status negotiations.

Abbas is an avid reader of history and Arabic poetry and enjoys classical Arabic music.

Date: 2003-03-10

UN Secretary-General Anan :Israel's Separation Wall 'Obstacle' to Two-State Solution

" The Secretary-General has repeatedly said 'settlements are a clear breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention and also contradict Israel's commitments under the Quartet's Road Map ..'"

NEW YORK - United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan expressed deep disquiet today by the Government of Israel's decisions to continue construction of a separation wall on the West Bank and build 600 new houses in the area, a UN spokesman said.

Referring to a statement issued on 26 September by the diplomatic Quartet - the United Nations, United States, European Union and Russian Federation - calling on both Israelis and Palestinians to address each other's core concerns, spokesman Fred Eckhard said the Secretary-General "views both the security wall and settlements in the West Bank built on Palestinian

land as serious obstacles to the achievement of a two-State solution."

"Moreover, the wall continues to cause great hardship to thousands of Palestinian families," Eckhard added.

The Secretary-General has repeatedly said "settlements are a clear breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention and also contradict Israel's commitments under the Quartet's Road Map" peace plan, the spokesman said.

The 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention on the wartime treatment of civilians forbids an occupying power to resettle its own civilians on territory under its military control.

The Road Map calls for a series of parallel and reciprocal steps by Israel and the Palestinians leading to two states living side by side in peace by 2005.

Date: 2003-03-10
